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"That which is good for the working class I esteem patriotic" — James Connolly

ZINK ON HIS FINGERS



DESMOND O'MALLEY, T.D.



F I A N A I F
A N N A
L I A F A I L

ZINK ON HIS FINGERS

BY BERNOT MCEVOY

MILLIONS of years ago a geological accident caused zinc-bearing strata to be deposited in, among other places, a few fields now near a town we know as Navan. Less than a decade back, a Mr. Wright, who hitherto had been content to have sheep safely grazing on the fields, was spurred by the discovery of zinc at nearby Tara to look under his topsoil. Presto! no more sheep; he was a zinc farmer! Indeed, he claimed he owned the zinc and, *mirabile dictu*, found bishops, TDs, Senators, mayors, aldermen and burgesses to agree with him; you are obviously a Communist if you question Mr. Wright's claim, especially as zinc does not result from any husbandry on his part.

For, you see, the rights of "private property" are safeguarded, nay enshrined, in the Irish Constitution. Now, you and I, through the agency of Mr. Justin Keating, Minister for Industry and Commerce, have agreed to pay £9½ million for less than a fourth share of those zinc concentrates that whirled into the Wright fields, now Bula Mining, aeons ago. What lunacy is this! Why should we pay Mr. Wright's estate (he died, poor fellow, before he could buy a yacht, a racehorse, even a magnum of Chateau Yquem) and the Bula shareholders for something that is so obviously not theirs? If it's anyone's, it is the property of the people of Ireland who would not, of course, begrudge paying the market price of the fields as fields, and a few quid on top for disturbance. But £9½ millions! And for only a bit of the action! Oh! Proudhon where are you now when we need you?

In the Dail debate, if you can dignify a discussion of national madness with the term, it emerged that one of our Limerick T.Ds, Desmond O'Malley of the Republican persuasion, had quietly invested £700 or so in Irish mining shares at a time when the Government of which he was a member was in continuing negotiation with nearby Tara and other mines. The very holding of the shares at the time shows O'Malley to be a crass ass with no sense of decorum.

It can be truly said of O'Malley, ever since he edged Mrs. Hilda O'Malley out of the Fianna Fail nomination, that he is a bounder with unbridled ambition, insensitive in every sphere, not forgetting his Middle Ages' plan to have the Government declare fornication a crime! (The jails would be full and, considering the antics of Fianna Failers in the Burlington, Sachs and the niteries of Dublin, a majority of the inmates would be his own party's faithful). But O'Malley and his ilk are irrelevant and, if Limerick values its self-respect, it should show him the door come election time. Whatever sentimental reason prompted people to vote for him at the last election there is no excuse for repeating the mistake. Just think, before I drop this distasteful subject, that the said O'Malley is reckoned among the cream of Fianna Fail, the Republican Party, and we've had compulsory education since the '80s, or is it the 90s...!

A final few words about Irish mining and its value to the nation. It was Fianna Fail in Government — and Mr. No-Screwing O'Malley — that gave mines like Tara, Gortdrum and Tynagh a twenty-year holiday from taxation. Twenty years! That's more than the life of the average mine so, in effect, it is absolute freedom from taxation. What have the mining companies done? Why they've shipped out the ore concentrates as fast as they could to be smelted elsewhere and

all it has cost them is a little local labour. At Gortdrum, as Limerick people can see for themselves, the zinc ore has been torn out of the ground and the land left a moonscape. There is no obligation on the mining company to restore the devastated area and not a penny reached the Exchequer. All in all, a mound, rather than a monument, to grace-less zinc-man O'Malley and the other ignoramuses of Fianna Fail. Not a mention of that in the Dail! Really, you must send someone there to show that YOU resent being screwed.

IN A MONTH without a political pronouncement from the North Circular Road I have had to look Northern Ireland. The Bishop of Down and Connor, Dr. Philbin, is more trenchant than I have been, even in 'The Bloody Irish' which Jim Kemmy tells me was well received in Limerick. With immeasurably more authority Dr. Philbin says Ireland has degenerated into a head-hunters' society; he pleads for wisdom, justice and love. Unexceptionable sentiments, and let me tell Dr. Philbin where he can make a start — in his own diocese, in Bangor to be precise. In Bangor, Protestant and Catholic children have been going to the same school, playing games together and getting to know each other. Just the sort of thing that Jim Kemmy and others like him have long advocated, as the only way to bridge the tribal divide, to lead us to a society actuated by the wisdom, justice and love apparently so dear to Dr. Philbin's heart. Regrettably, Dr. Philbin is refusing Confirmation to children who attend that school. Which is the very antithesis of — wisdom, justice and love.

THE GARDAI, who have been under attack for their alleged

Anna Livia

Your skirts are red-brick to the South
To hide me, Anna Livia.
I have sucked insanity from these streets,
These drains of stone
Where that man died.

With neon they inflamed your heart,
With metal rods they gave you sky
And I am blind below
This red, this orange, this glow.

Mid-October was you;
A confetti of leaves,
Ankle-deep in Baggot Street.

Yes, take me,
Your homunculus,
Grow me again
Screaming between thighs,
Open the eyes that writhe
Shut in pain —
Yes! Anna Livia
Perish and cherish me,
Anna Livia, my mother!
O! my lover Anna Livia!

brutality to prisoners, would normally have my sympathy but, though other memories may be short, the refusal by Chief Supt. Kenny in Limerick to investigate the injuries received while in custody by Michael Murphy still rankles. Who does the Chief Super think he is? Is he above the law? If his men were innocent, an inquiry could only enhance the public regard for a force paid for out of public funds; Chief Supt. Kenny's continued silence is a piece of insolence and innocent Gardai must now take the consequences.

Moreover, and by the way, what sort of training do the Guards get at Templemore? A Garda, a native of Limerick, called on me for a witness statement a short time back. We chatted over tea and buns and, hearing he was from Limerick, I naturally asked him if he read the *Limerick Socialist*. 'Is that subversive?' he asked. 'In a way', I said. And in a way I suppose it is, but what an odd attitude of mind for an upholder of the law, a guardian of the peace. If that's the way our Gardai are trained at Templemore, the bishops, the bourgeoisie and the Bula recipients of public assistance have nothing to learn from Major-General Frank Kitson, the SAS teacher.

One must not say even to oneself that a Garda is entitled to give a smack in the kisser to a prisoner — and it has happened — who spits in his face; he is not so entitled; he must forbear and he would do so if he were properly trained at Templemore from a curriculum that did not equate socialism with subversion. Socialists and non-Socialists alike spit, metaphorically, at Gardai who exceed their duty which is, simply, to bring criminals to justice. It's what we pay them for.

CONSIDERING THIS whole question of the ill-treatment of prisoners, real or trumped up — and I am referring now to convicted prisoners — we ought not forget the day-to-day ill-treatment of the prisoners' victims. Let us take a sample: eight-year-old Eamon Logue of Derry City had his left arm blown off by an innocent-looking canister that turned out to be an IRA bomb, which he picked up in the street. Hooding, with noise, standing with arms outstretched, bread and water, all have to stop; even torturers get tired. But Eamon can *never* clasp his hands in prayer, play games, get a proper job, hold a girl in his arms like anyone else; he is tortured for the rest of his life. And so is his mother.

This continuing ill-treatment does not rate a paragraph in the *Irish Times*, let alone a poster like 'Police Brutality Investigated' (rather pre-judging the issue that?). Will Brits Out, or Brits In give Eamon Logue his arm back, or end his mother's heartbreak? Who remembers Eamon Logue anyhow, who remembers the young girl who lost both legs in the IRA bombing of the Abercorn Restaurant in Belfast? Well, I do, but then I am a socialist, and, of course, a subversive. Fortunately, there are many more like me in Limerick, Dr. 'Brits Out' Newman and Chief. Supt. Kenny notwithstanding.

Let me rub this in while I'm at it. Here is a piece from a notebook kept by Daphne, the widow of Professor Gordon Hamilton Fairley, the 45-year-old cancer specialist, and mother of his four children (he was blown to bits by an IRA bomb while taking his dog for an early-morning walk near my previous Holland Park, London, home):

I am not political in any way and I still do not feel bitter towards Ireland and the Irish; but as a mother and someone who has always dealt with the problems of people in difficulties (she is a speech therapist), it seems to me they are behaving rather like delinquent children . . . To kill leaders of the community, like the director of Dupont, is aimless to say the least, as he was presumably, indirectly, helping to house, feed and clothe a lot of Irish families.

My husband had, I know, over the years unstintingly tried to cure many Irish patients of cancer, as well as lecturing and teaching Irish students.

Do these deaths make any commonsense? They certainly cause innocent people, like ourselves, months if not years of numb, gaping sadness . . . The children have taken it very

hard; their father was such a loving, caring family man.

Are you still sympathetic to the Provo campaign? I hope not. Still on the fence like Fianna Fail, or that ex-Clann na Phoblachta reject Steve Coughlan? I hope not. Of course, the IRA and their fellow-travellers say that these sad things are unintended, the natural accidents of 'war' and for the most part highly regrettable. The two men who stab K at the end of Kafka's 'The Trial' do so with the most courteous expressions of regret. That kind of thing makes all the difference. Especially when a boy of eight looks for a left arm that is not there.

BE WARY of 'experts', especially economists. Already these gentlemen have built up a butter mountain of 190,000 metric tons, tonnes in Brussels lingo, and offer an export subsidy of 41p a lb, that is for export to non-EEC countries. Before the biggest Brussels sprout, Britain's Roy Jenkins, put the brake on an entrepreneur managed to sell one 10,000-ton lot to the Russians at 17p a lb. My wife tells me the local price is 52p or more a lb. Of course, it would be irregular for Ireland to get any of the 17p stuff, the price has to be kept up to help Paddy Lane's men! Yes, the very fellows whose Income Tax you pay.

Indeed, the aforesaid Mr. Lane ran well up to form when he told the Marketing Institute of Ireland that the productive sector of Ireland's economy, including farming, is being stifled by the extent of social welfare services, "money taken by the State and redistributed to those who do not produce". Widows, orphans and pensioners, lie down! But, of course, continue to pay 52p for 17p butter to keep petrol in the posh cars of Paddy Lane's men!

In all this what does the national interest demand? That's easy. Senator Brian Lenihan, general sidekick for Charles Haughey who so casually mislaid £100,000 of your money, told the Ard Fheis of Fianna Fail, that the paramount national interest is for Fianna Fail to win the next election. I'm prepared to accept that it is the paramount interest of Fianna Fail, but for the rest of the proposition I can't be as enthusiastic as the Senator; it doesn't jell.

A MAGNIFICENT beginners series of comic-strip documentaries with a critical sting is launched this month with *Marx for Beginners*. It is information made easy and I strongly recommend it. No longer will you have to wade through all the oppressive literature, including some of Marx's own work, to understand the thinking behind the system adopted by half the world.

Rius, the Mexican cartoonist, who executed the drawings and did the letterpress, offers as stimulating a concept as has ever been produced. You can get this little masterpiece for £1 plus, say, 15p postage, from Writers & Readers Publishing Cooperative, 14 Talacre Road, London N.W. 5 3 PE.

MONEY IS needed to win elections. So I commend the Jim Kemmy Appeal in this issue. His helpers are, of course, all volunteers, but printing and paper are expensive and Jim, a worker, and his colleagues cannot meet all these costs themselves. Will all the people who wish him well give the price of a pint or two or a couple of packets of fags? That would get him home and you will have given a slap in the eye to the big battalions. Please do not think that your contribution will not help. Who remembers any donation in human history more vividly than the widow's mite?

AND FINALLY you might think this one over. A priest called to complain to a mother that her two lads were mitching from school. Said he, "I met your boys down the road and do you know they couldn't tell me who made the world". To which the mother answered, "Arrah, Father, for all they'll ever own of it, does it matter?"

**PART
26**

**BY
P.J. RYAN**

THE POST OFFICE STRIKE

Prior to the departure of the British, six men had been appointed to the staff of the Post Office as "established" officers. They had been appointed over the heads of the existing staff, to whom they were unknown. Their presence was endured with resentment until the second week in September, 1922. By that time the Staters held a precarious hold over most of the country but little was needed to upset or destroy the balance of power. In this event the British would have been welcomed back as Angels of Mercy. On the 11th September, the Post Office workers in Limerick went on strike. They demanded the removal of the six men and, while they were on strike, it was thought expedient to seek also a rise in pay.

The six men continued in office and maintained a limited postal service. They paid out the Old Age and British Army Pensions. They sorted the mail and sent it out of the city. For this work two small Post Office pick-up trucks were used. They were painted the distinctive Post Office red with the Royal Crest G.R. painted out. There was no telegraph service, neither was there local deliveries of letters. Firms and individuals could call to Cecil Street for their mail. As a safety measure no parcels were accepted. Because of the strike the wildest rumours could circulate around the country without contradiction or confirmation.

Officers and men in the army might be tempted from their allegiance by the most slanderous stories and tales of Staters loss and Diehards gain. The stated motives of the strike were different from the real purpose. The strike was a political act to embarrass the Government. It was in effect an act of sabotage against the state. In this context it is reasonable to ask: Were the men animated by hate of the newly created state or by servile obedience to their Union leaders? Were they moved to act by a sense of allegiance to the British Crown?

All of those men had been lately servants of the Crown, subject to the rules and regulations of the British Postmaster General. They were paid an adjustable and rising scale of pay and could look forward to a pension on retirement. They were subject to a discipline which through the years might have imbued them with a sense of allegiance to the British interest.

Though resident in Limerick not all of them were from the city. Some were from other parts of the country. They might deride the country and its ways and yet feel no sense of pride or concern for the city in which they made their living.

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The Fourth Siege of Limerick

With the signing of the Treaty there was established a Provisional Government of Ireland. One of the first acts of the Provisional Government was to overprint some stocks of British stamps with "Rialtas Sealadae na Eireann". (Provisional Government of Ireland). Later again other stocks of stamps were overprinted "Sacrstat Eireann". (Irish Free State). The Postmaster General was J.J. Walshe, a Corkman.

Did the overprint on George V provoke loyalist animosity?

The fact of the strike for higher wages was an admission of the authority of the newly created State. It was an admission that the State could increase their pay, or sack them in the old Imperial tradition. Because of the nature of their work, they were sufficiently educated to understand the moral and political implications of their acts. Yet they allowed themselves to be used as pawns or stooges in the interest of political adventurers. They formed a provocative picket, walking up and down past the post office yard gate in Henry Street. They arrived in the morning at 8 o'clock and remained until six in the evening. There were never less than twenty men in the picket. They carried no banner or sign of their purpose. They could have paraded on picket at the public entrance in Cecil Street, but there the public would have become aware of their presence and set upon them.

They set themselves on picket in Henry Street under the protection of the Staters whom they derided. There was a guard of fifteen Staters in the Post Office and about seventy in Field General Headquarters, Southern Command, directly opposite, in the former palace of the Protestant Bishop of Limerick. The two posts could protect each other by covering fire.

Four sentries were on post, all of them visible to each other. The orders to the sentries were: **In the event of an attack on any post or sentry, shoot the attackers or anyone in the line of fire.** The strikers were aware of this order.

As they passed the sentry on the Post Office gate, the strikers came into the line of fire many times during each hour of the day.

Had an attack on the posts occurred, some dead strikers would have become political martyrs, with bronze plaques commemorating their heroism. Their names would have been rendered in Celtic. A sportsfield, a street, or public building would have been named in their honour. Thanks to the vigilance of the Intelligence Service of the Staters and the comic intervention of the women of Limerick, no such attack occurred.

The limited service of the six appointees and others was unable to cope with the pile of mail and pension claims. The female relatives, friends and sympathisers of the many kinds of pensioners lined up every day in Cecil Street. They at length discovered the strength of their numbers and the cause of their misfortunes. With unanimity of thought and purpose they moved in a mass around to Henry Street, and, attacking the strikers, put them to flight.

This was Women's Hour in the Third Siege of Limerick. The strikers returned to work on the first of October. The six appointees were sent to other civil service posts.

There were no martyrs!

(To be continued).

FIANNA FAIL

De Valera formed the Fianna Fail party in 1926 and contested an election in the following year. Hardline republicans, wet with blood from a senseless Civil War, blamed him for opportunism and accused him of prostituting republicanism on the ballot paper of personal ambition. There is no doubt that he was personally ambitious, but neither is there any doubt that his entry to constitutional politics was a sensible and pragmatic step. Unfortunately for Ireland the vast majority of republicans, not alone have no feeling nor understanding of politics, but positively detest politicians: they believe in the warrior society where the final decision is taken with a gun.

After the general election in 1927, de Valera had the biggest opposition party; in 1932 he formed a Government with the help of the Labour Party which was told: 'Labour must wait'. It has been a long confinement and it is doubtful if the baby will ever see the light. De Valera was to lead the country for 16 turbulent years with total support and unquestioning loyalty from his followers. The Irish love royalty: the Pathe News film of Elizabeths coronation packed the Galway cinemas, and Princess Anne's marriage to the sausage-maker had half of the people in the country glued to T.V. sets. Lacking an Irish monarch, they elevated Dev. to kingship; he had monarchical traits (as popularly conceived), aloofness, dignity of carriage and intellectual attributes.

Peadar O'Donnell was campaigning against the land annuities (payment to the landlords for land they had possessed *vi et armis*). De Valera saw a good populist platform and announced that the new Government would withhold the £5 million annuities and other payments. Britain put a bounty on Irish cattle, the principal export, and Ireland replied with a duty on British goods. The Government capitalising on chauvinistic rampant nationalism and the religious mania of the Eucharistic Congress paved the way for the abolition the oath of allegiance to the British Crown. Neither of these acts were of any practical value to the Irish people — quite the opposite. The farmers slaughtered calves for their hides and buried the carcasses. The Economic War hit the farming community but the disciples remained loyal. There was the small farmer who went into the bank in Dingle and, on being taunted by a Fine Gael bank manager on the penniless state to which Dev had reduced him, replied in Irish, giving his opinions on the politics and character of the manager and reiterating loyalty to 'The Chief'.

De Valera was a populist — nationalist; he was a child of his time in an age of rampant nationalism and unquestioning, blind belief in the free enterprise system. He supported the popular philosophies of the time. It was a transition period from monarchical figures: people needed a god-figure to replace the King, the Czar and the Kaiser. Italy elevated Mussolini; in Russia Lenin, after his death, became a cult figure, something he would never have permitted during his lifetime, and Germany and Spain spawned Hitler and Franco. And we produced de Valera.

De Valera is still awaiting a critical biography: Dorothy McArdle's is pure fiction, and the O'Neill-Fenton official biography is lacking in any objectivity. That he was a committed ultra-nationalist cannot be denied. He believed in the revival of the Irish language and the unification of the country, without having any solid considered programme to achieve either aim. He was a romantic, and he may have hoped that he could infuse some of his romanticism into the soul of the nation and realise his dream of 32-county ceili-dancing coleens, living a frugal life in picturesque cottages. He did say that he could look into his heart to understand the feelings of

the Irish nation. But say what one will, instigator of Civil War, romantic nationalist, pawn of Anglo-American capitalism, he commanded respect and loyalty, bordering on adoration in some cases, from a majority of the citizens through an Economic War and the second World War, during which he maintained national neutrality.

He was Machiavellian. John A. Costelloe stated it and Dev enjoyed the observation and frequently referred to it. This was certainly one of the traits he shared with his successor Sean Lemass. He also recognised the latter's organisational and leadership qualities. Lemass was a backslapping wheeler-dealer with whom one checked one's wallet after an encounter. You certainly wouldn't buy a second-hand car from him. And it was during the Lemass period that entrepreneurs, political Uriah Heeps, and smalltime foreign capitalists came into the Fianna Fail party, or became camp-followers for their own advancement. Noel Hartnett said he left the party when he first saw a £1,000 cheque on the table of the party's headquarters.

Dev wouldn't have allowed the hustlers of the Lemass age a foothold in the Mount Street door but at this stage he was in the Park and undoubtedly felt that the mohair suit brigade was a little beyond him.

This was the Lemass boom period, with smalltime American, English and Japanese businessmen coming in opening little factories, collecting the IDA grants and disappearing into the setting sun of the Canaries, leaving a little group of would-be industrial workers behind, sadder and wiser. The small farmer became an embarrassment to the party and they paid him dole. The vast army of unemployed and unemployable rural poor next became an embarrassment; they also paid them dole. The revival of the language became an anachronism, but they gave grants to the Gaeltachts. The old party stalwarts were given seats at the back of the class; the solicitors, doctors, engineers and businessmen were brought up front. The national teacher, the Gaelgeoir, the small farmer, the trade unionist was exhibited at party conferences but he had no say in running the party. He was handy at election times to gum letters, to canvass, to poster or to introduce a speaker at the church gate. But the party had new values and he just didn't belong: he was a dead animal.

This trend continues. The new recruits to the party come from the professions and the business world. Fianna Fail has developed in a similar fashion to the Christian Democrats party in Italy, with comparative corruption. There was the missing £100,000, the Arms Trial of senior Ministers charged with procuring arms for the neo-fascist Provos, there was Jack's around-the-world voyage with Gulf Oil, Molloy's speculating in building land while, Minister for Local Government and Des O'Malley's investment in Tara Mines while holding Ministerial office. In Britain all these politicians would have been dismissed but the Roman Catholic countries have a built-in capacity for accepting corruption.

But no cause for sweat: capitalist parties are always corrupt; the system is dedicated to Mammon and the priests of the system adore the golden calf. Nationalism and Sinn Feinism (of whatever brand) are diametrically opposed to the tenets and practice of socialism. Big Jim Larkin is considered by most as a political agitator more than thinker and he was probably guided more often by his instincts than by a finely conceived philosophy. When he was being questioned during his trial in New York in 1920, he was asked if he were opposed to Irish nationalism and Sinn Feinism, to which he replied: "I am opposed to both movements".

Despite the mistakes of the paSt, it is heartening that this gut-feeling is being echoed today by more and more workers.

Political Ballhop

Mr. Dessie O'Malley issued a statement last week explaining his buying of £500 shares in Tara Mines. O'Malley, known in Fianna Fail circles as "The Terrier, snapped and growled at a number of journalists and made a bite at the "Irish Times" journalist Nell McCafferty.

Deputy O'Malley's statement read:

It is a gross fabrication by the Minister for Industry and Commerce Justin Keating to say that I used my office to make a profitable investment in Tara Mines. Nothing could be further from the truth. I would not go to the civil servants for advice to heal a sore paw. When I was Minister for Justice members of the Special Branch were living next door to David O'Connell and Kevin Mallon and failed to recognise them.

With that sort of experience is it likely that I would seek advice from civil servants and further taking into consideration that Peter Berry, a former secretary of the Department of Justice has been wagging a personal vendetta against me, claiming that he should have been paid a designated lump sum on his resignation for a lifetime of compiling dossiers on subversives? I may have promised the little blighter something but I never put it in writing and had no intention of paying him.

No, as Mr. Keating knows quite well, I went for advice to my old employee and City Council colleague, Paddy Kiely. Paddy advised me to buy shares and told me that he had a dream of a great hole in the earth spilling gold on to the green sward of Ireland. It was on this advice that I decided to invest £500. I later discovered that my money had never been invested".

The final comment came appropriately from the Fianna Fail ex-Minister to the Aesop of Irish politics, Michael Mills.

I'm giving up politics. Limerick does not appreciate my talents and there is not enough money in it. I intend to go to Palermo, Sicily; things are more clearcut there.

Mr. Mills put another question to the ex-Minister and was later seen limping from the building nursing a bruised ankle.

THE STING OF JUSTICE

BY DERMOT McEVOY

IT IS a far cry from bananas to George Blake, the Russian agent whose escape from Wormwood Scrubs, London jail was masterminded by Sean Bourke. Yet it is certain from last month's "Daingean Days" that but for the myopic savagery of the late District Justice Dermot Gleeson who had Sean Bourke as a 12-year-old, committed to the degradation of Daingean for knocking-off bananas he would never have wound up in The Scrubs.

I knew Gleeson, a W.T. Cosgrave-ite from Nenagh, when he was administering 'justice' in Clare; he was a waspish fellow, a real martinet. So much so that the Clare Fianna Fail Mafia led by the late Jack Degan, a tip-top local journalist, and Paddy Con MacMahon, a contractor who dithered so long over the building of the Post Office Bridge over the River Fergus that it was known as the 'Bridge of Signs', decided to recommend Gleeson for promotion to Limerick!

That's how Sean Bourke encountered 'Bananas' Gleeson — to his considerable sorrow and, ultimately, to George Blake's joy. It was Gleeson's boast that he put Christianity first and, a paradox this, justice second. He would, for instance, take a special interest in affiliation order cases. In one such case from Crusheen he dismissed on its merits a Garda prosecution of two men who had seized a putative father and, without benefit of anaesthetic, put a pig-ring through his penis (any of Paddy Lane's men will explain to you why a pig is ringed but, to save you asking, it is to discourage the pig from rooting).

NEITHER REST NOR ROOST

BY SEAN HEALY.

Along the long contours curving of the beach,
warp and weft of wave weave patterns on the sands;
muted and flown the querulous seagulls now,
only a solitary oystercatcher, perched in silhouette upon a rock
contemplates the submerged mussels beyond his reach,
while the tired delicate daylight's diminished to a rose window
in the broken gables of the emigrated day.

I could sit indefinitely here,
lulled by the sounds of the lipping sea,
a quiet mood of dreams infusing the mind with calm,
while the dark brown hills behind
weave their ancient magic round me.

A sweet nostalgia of the Celtic Twilight
descends like hypnotic dew upon the senses,
as the old legends silently re-inhabit the shadows;
(the mysticism of twilight amongst hills like these
transforms the mythology of three thousand years
to seem but a thing of yesterday).

Beyond the waters on my right,
like a petrified slab of night suspended
between the twilight dying and its light reflected,
lies the long profile of a lonely isle,
hallowed by beauty and saintly residence;
(for in those far-off days a saint could pick and choose
the quietest place wherein to pray, and brew his mead,
and while the peasants sweated at the hay,
undisturbed, the holy man could offer up a prayer,
then quietly snooze).

Oh, enough irreverent mind of mine.

Gleeson laughed at all this and not only dismissed the grievous bodily harm charge but ordered the victim, who strenuously denied fathering the baby, to pay up until the child was sixteen. Another boast of Gleeson's was that invariably he adjourned such cases so that pressure, clerical and lay, could be put on the man to marry the girl; he advised employers, for instance, to sack the man who would not conform.

On one occasion in the lounge of Linnane's Hotel, Lahinch, Gleeson defended his judicial shot-gun behaviour before an audience of holidaying priests from the Diocese of Clonfert. When I demurred Gleeson dismissed me by saying that I had obviously become infected through living in a pagan country, England. It was then I pointed out to Gleeson and the priests an occasion when he departed from his stern code when a very close realitive, a university student, put the Gleesons' maid at their Newmarket on Fergus home in the family way he did not then insist on marriage. Oh, no! He gave the girl £200 to go to England! The worst feature of this case was that the young man concerned was anxious to marry the girl. Of course that would never do; it would ruin the young man's career to be tied to one of the lower orders.

After that, you could hear the silence in Linnane's lounge. I left to walk on the prom. I was soon joined by a priest from Buttevant who had been in the audience. He put an arm round me and kindly said: "Perhaps you are a better Christian than Mr. Gleeson". I won't comment on the priest's words but I feel that Sean Bourke — and a host of other people I know who've worn The Old Scrubs Tie are better people than many of the District Justices I have seen.

for I had thought, that in a mood like this,
nothing rude or religiously amiss should thus provoke
anything resembling an agnostic joke.

Oh, let me pause, let peace again infuse my mind,
for I've come here to rest my outraged thoughts,
running from a world that's petty clever, but greatly blind.
Here where a scimitar of sand cleaves land from ocean,
the pettiness of life's routine dwindles to a contemplative
mood;
Like the black symbols of the necromancer's art,
a flock of crows flit through the dusk,
but, unlike the crows, my thoughts unlocked
find neither rest nor roost.

For I am angry with the ancient myths,
invoked by men with windy minds;
no seekings after God obsess me now,
and I have found the search for truth,
a liberal middleclass pursuit,
while the want of millions is bread, and only bread.

Oh, perverse planet, I behold the exotic beauty
and poured molten gold of sunset skies,
the liquid eyes of twilight melting into night,
the mysticism born of changing light,
the flower that balances on its slender stem,
the bow-shaped beauty of the swallow's wing,
the delicate arrow of its flight:

and yet,
beneath it all, the sickening curse
of empty bellies, abysmal need,
the blasphemies of war,
the obscenity of greed.

Night gathers her black shawl round the shoulders of the earth,
while beneath the shadow of the mountains,
homely lights from scattered farms shine lonely, one by one;
yes, one by one, while deepening darkness
hides evidence of a vanished people;
but at evening the tangents of a slanting sun reveals
the furrows' contours in former fields,
farmed on the mountainside
by men who made
a humble living, aided only by the simple spade;
men who caged the mountains in their lair,
with stone fence chains that bind
their monstrous shoulders to the earth,
anchors against the wind, the thunder and the tide.

By yonder mountain fence,
now overgrown with fern and furze,
once stood an old thatched home,
that could survey from its vantage height
four small holdings round about,
within the compass of a shout;
though one man owns them all today,
it's but a wilderness that does not pay its way.

And yet, those ruined bohawns
gave shelter and meagre food to many families
who descendants now
swell the gross product of other lands,
maybe with less sweat upon their brows,
but the loss is ours,
and although we rightly may blame Britain
for that former historical condition,
yet, with the three fields that we won,
what have we done, what have we done;
a half century of fruitless hopes, and wasted years
has seen our nation,
trickling down the drain of emigration.

The gombeen soul and the gombeen brain
lives and breeds on greed and gain,

the economist, whose analytic range
is restricted to figures on the stock exchange,
and applies his machinations and tests of greed
to the human essential of planting seed,
should be banished from the decent race of men,
back to the obscenity of his boardroom den.

Oh, blessed beauty of my native hills,
I have returned to you again, to renew my soul and balm my
brains,
let love of mankind infuse my heart with tolerance and pity,
that I may know,
what clockwork makes their being tick,
what makes them quick, what makes them slow,
and if I can by power of verse, or political plan,
increase the happiness of man,
all the dedication of my being I'd give,
to help the down-trodden and deprived to live.

SEAN HEALY

BY JOHN CASEY

In an island famous in the past for its poets, poetasters, poetlings and literati many of whom, we have always been told, ranked second to none on the world's literary stage, there are more poets publishing today than in any previous decade. A glance at any contemporary anthology, 'Cyphers' for example, and the names leap out. Possibly one of the most significant political points is that their work is devoid of the influence of any political philosophy. This is not to say that they do not comment on contemporary events: they, do, but their work is not guided by any clear political commitment.

Some would argue that a poet does not have to be political, does not have to write on social issues and indeed this has always been the more popular line. But there are and have always been political poets, Mayakoosky, Breeht, Yeats (with a nationalist and a fascist stage), Hugh MacDiarmid and Pablo Neruda.

Sean Healy's published book of poems, "Trumpets of the Sun", (Dolmen, 1973) is informed with the socialist spirit, Sean Healy, is a Kerryman who worked for many years in England on building sites and driving a brewery truck. Like Jim Kemmy, and many more, he graduated from the school of manual labour. His poetry is marked by his experiences in this university of the world:

*Do you know what the fetid sweat smells like,
clotted and stinking under the belt?
has the salt of it ever stung your eyes,
where pit-props are the only trees you see,
and the ceiling of a two-foot seam of coal
the limits of your only dust-choked skies".*

His poetry is full of the love of life and of his fellow man, sympathy and understanding of human weakness, hatred for violence, cruelty and injustice, a contempt for hypocrisy and empty religious cant. It is the work of a man talking to his fellow men, free of pedantry and cultivated obscurity. You can read each poem and understand it and nowadays that is no bad recommendation.

The poems I particularly like are "Land of the Savage", "Pagan Flames", "Cry for Bread" and "The Humanist's Prayer" but individual readers may not agree with this choice.

Sean Healy is not widely known in Ireland for a very simple reason: he does not seek publicity and in a radio interview some months ago said that he did not greatly mind whether his poems were published or not. He is obviously an artist in love with his craft. Regular readers of the "Limerick Socialist" will have read one of Sean Healy's unpublished poems in last month's issue. We will be publishing other poems in future issues. We would like to recommend his book, the first edition of which is nearly sold out.

THE DUBLIN LEFT

REPLY TO JOHN THRONE

In answer to John Throne's letter published last month, may I say that I wrote the article, on the Dublin Left using Mr. Throne's letter to the press as a jumping-off point, and when I referred to 'pseudo-intellectuals and dullards' I was not thinking of him. I'm sorry if he thought otherwise. But in answer I wish to make the following points:

(1) He refers to 'Militant Irish Monthly': this paper is printed and published in England by English, Trotskyites and contains Irish inserts from John Throne and others. Its editorial line comes from people who do not understand the Irish situation.

(2) He wants to have a scenario mapped out. You cannot predict the future. When the masses move they beat out a path for themselves. Lenin had no blueprint for 1917: he worked out his strategy in keeping with the developments, using common sense and political pragmatism, qualities not too much in evidence amongst the Dublin Left.

(3) The Dublin Left is made up of Mercedes Benz Marxists, political dilettantes and young men in leather jackets plotting revolutions on bar stools. Most of their time is spent infiltrating and poaching one another's parties, hunting other left wingers, and hatching political plots and schemes which are as ridiculous as the hatching are amusing. The Dublin Left does not include Joan Throne's little group which is not even taken seriously within the Labour Party.

(4) John Throne is committed to the Labour Party where

his influence is nil. Labour is the party which he believes will swing to the left in the present economic crisis and become a major party, picking up in the region of 67 seats. He points to Sinn Fein in 1918, and the Parti Quebecois who jumped from anonymity to being major parties. He neglects however, to mention that both were nationalist parties, and history has taught that nationalists make excellent Tories. The establishment was not worried. After the last conference Brendan Corish told the Labour parliamentary party that he wished to retire. A preliminary head-count within the party hierarchy clearly pointed to James Tully as the next leader. Mr. Tully proudly boasts of the distinction of being to the right of Liam Cosgrave. So much for John Throne's dreams.

(5) He also says that the Spanish Communist Party betrayed their followers during the Spanish Civil War. They did no such thing. Nor is he correct in blaming the French Party for refusing to be lured to disaster by Cohn-Bendit with his assorted following of anarchists and Trotskyites in the student capers of '68. No, John Throne, the Labour Party has lost credibility. It is a party of careerists, gombeen men and place-seekers. It is the party for petrified liberals, patching holes in the rotting capitalist structure, and, if one wants to spend one's time in the cosmetic business, that can hardly be described as working class politics.

JOHN CASEY

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